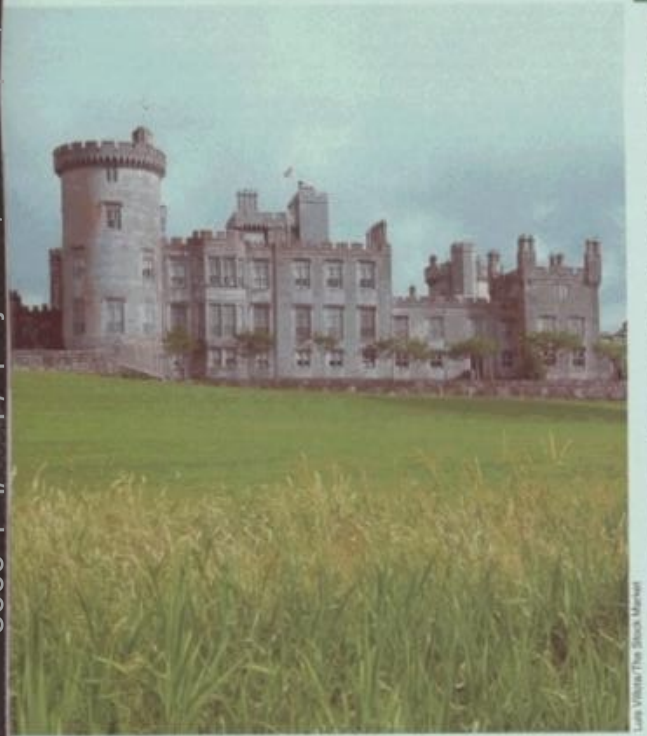
LIVE LIKE A KING

Royal Vacations in Europe's Castle-Hotels

by Eve Glasberg



Luis Villota/The Stock Market

Americans traveling to Europe often find their choice of hotel dictated by their destination. London or the Loire Valley is the foremost consideration, while where to bed down is an afterthought—provided it's comfortable and the price is right.

But it doesn't have to be this way. A Spanish fortress on a mountaintop, a baroque palace in Vienna, or a turreted castle in the Scottish Highlands all can easily become destinations in themselves.

Here's a selection of the choicest regal retreats throughout Europe, where guests are treated like visiting royalty. Prices for a double room range from $110 to $345; taxes and service charges are included in every instance—except at the Villa d'Este, where living in the lap of luxury goes for $370 and up.

Castillo de Santa Catalina (Jaén, Spain)

Dramatically situated on a mountaintop, this spectacular castle-hotel is one of the Paradores Nacionales, the 86 government-owned hostelries that are all converted castles, monasteries, or baronial houses. The stone fortress, located about 200 miles south of Madrid, was erected in the 13th century by Muhammad I al-Ghalib.

The hotel is set atop the Cerro de Santa Catalina, more than 2,000 feet above sea level. It's possible to climb the fortress's towers or explore the olive groves just below it.

Castillo de Santa Catalina will reopen at the end of October after an extensive renovation. Although the 43 guestrooms are in a separate building alongside the fortress, they have been artfully designed to match it in architectural style and spirit, with vaulted ceilings, wooden beds, and Spanish-tile floors.

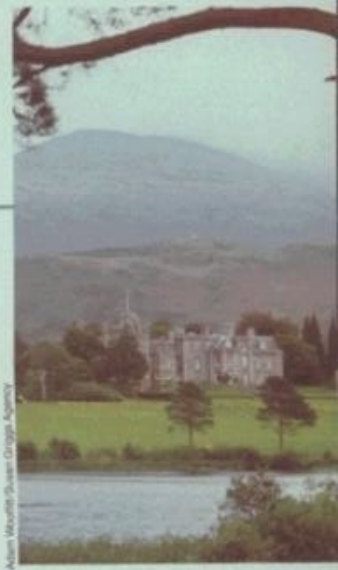
The cuisine of Jaén combines the exotic flavors of Andalusia with the more austere fare of La Mancha, so the menu is marvelously eclectic.

For information: Castillo de Santa Catalina, Jaén, Spain; 53-26-44-11. U.S. contact: Marketing Ahead, Inc., 433 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10016, 212-686-9213.

Dromoland Castle (Newmarket-on-Fergus, Ireland)

For almost a thousand years, this County Clare estate was the ancestral home of the royal O'Brien clan. The current neo-Gothic castle, all turrets and towers, was built from the 16th through the 19th centuries and is set amid 500 acres of rolling green lawns and forests. Dromoland's air of elegant isolation belies the fact that it's just eight miles from Shannon International Airport.

The castle's sumptuous decor includes original wood paneling and enormous oil paintings. The 75 guestrooms are luxuriously ap-



Adam Woolfitt/Susan Griggs Agency

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Fit for a king (and a queen): European castle-hotels that pamper guests in a princely manner include Austria's Hotel Im Palais Schwarzenberg (left) in the center of Vienna; Inverlochy Castle (above) in the Scottish Highlands; and Dromoland Castle (opposite page) in the west of Ireland.

Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/xxlg0035731
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